

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 50

By Clemmons

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Mary Frances Hodges Lyle of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Mary Frances Hodges Lyle, a woman whose commitment to social equity improved the lives of all Tennesseans; and

WHEREAS, a renowned advocate for change, Mary Frances Lyle worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for her fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, throughout her twenty-four-year career as the sole lobbyist for the Nashville Women's Political Caucus, Ms. Lyle served with the utmost dedication; her unstinting efforts on behalf of women, children, and families effected significant legislation of real and lasting consequence; and

WHEREAS, Mary Frances Hodges Lyle was born in Texarkana, Texas, on February 22, 1936, to Robert Lewis Hodges, Sr., and Frances DePrato Hodges and was raised in Mena, Arkansas; and

WHEREAS, Mary Frances Lyle enrolled in the University of Arkansas in 1952, a time when young women were afforded very limited choices of profession; as a consequence, she initially discarded her dream of becoming a lawyer; and

WHEREAS, with perseverance, Ms. Lyle completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in Education while raising her four children; she graduated from the University of Louisville, *magna cum laude*, in 1966, when her children were five, seven, nine, and eleven years of age; and

WHEREAS, after teaching third grade for ten years, Mary Frances Lyle applied to and was accepted by Vanderbilt University Law School in 1976 at the age of forty; as a result of her own struggles, she developed a deep understanding of the barriers women must overcome in

order to achieve their potential; at every opportunity she spoke to groups of women, encouraging them to follow their vocational dreams regardless of age, educational background, or station in life; and

WHEREAS, as a law student, Ms. Lyle worked as a volunteer law clerk at what was then called Legal Services of Nashville and participated in a survey of sales of weekly premium insurance policies to low-income individuals, most of whom were women living in housing projects. The results of this research culminated in the published study "Poor People and the Insurance Industry in Tennessee," which was cited in a Federal Trade Commission report; the television program *60 Minutes* used the Nashville study as part of its presentation on the issue, and Ms. Lyle testified before state legislative and federal congressional committees regarding the sale of insurance to the poor; and

WHEREAS, in 1981, Mary Frances Lyle was hired as a lobbyist by the Nashville Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) to advocate for women's issues in the Tennessee General Assembly; Ms. Lyle worked assiduously to promote legislation affecting women, children, and families until her retirement in 2006; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lyle's lobbying efforts were instrumental to the NWPC's success in drafting and passing family law legislation that provided for economic recognition of the homemaker's role as contribution toward the acquisition of assets, as well as recognition of pension benefits as marital property; and

WHEREAS, several years prior to the federal Family Leave Act, Mary Frances Lyle helped the Caucus draft and pass legislation to provide women with up to four months unpaid maternity leave and allow them to return to their jobs without loss of benefits or seniority; and

WHEREAS, through Ms. Lyle's invaluable efforts, the NWPC established the Tennessee Childcare Facilities Loan Guarantee Corporation and obtained one million dollars in state funding to guarantee loans for the start-up or expansion of childcare facilities; and

WHEREAS, Mary Frances Lyle aided in the drafting and passing of legislation requiring the Secretary of State to publish an annual directory of boards and commissions and to publish a monthly listing of vacancies; and

WHEREAS, in addition, Ms. Lyle's persistent efforts on behalf of the NWPC ensured the passage of a bill defining sexual harassment and requiring that notice of the law be mailed to all employers in the state; and

WHEREAS, Mary Frances Lyle's professional accomplishments also include the drafting and passing of legislation requiring alternating appointments of women to the Tennessee Board of Education, the Board of Regents, the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission until membership on the boards reflected the proportion of men and women in the general population; legislation creating the Domestic Violence State Coordinating Council for the purpose of designing a domestic violence training course and curriculum for law enforcement and judicial personnel; legislation prohibiting health insurers from denying coverage or refusing to pay benefits to victims of domestic violence; and statutes passed, in conjunction with the League of Women Voters and several other organizations, to establish the Tennessee Economic Council on Women; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lyle's advocacy for family issues on behalf of the NWPC is evident in the 2003 legislation she helped establish as state policy, "It is the public policy of this state to encourage and support marriage, and to encourage family arrangements that provide for the rearing of healthy and productive children who will become healthy and productive citizens of our state."; and

WHEREAS, a founding member of the law firm Bruce, Weathers, Corley, and Lyle, Ms. Lyle received numerous accolades for her dedication to family law, including induction as a Master Attorney into the Harry Phillips Inn of Court in 2002 and inclusion in the "Best Lawyers in America" for five consecutive years; and

WHEREAS, a public-minded citizen of the highest order, Mary Frances Lyle firmly believed in the importance of addressing the issues of poverty, oppression, and political disenfranchisement; to that end, she was a founding member of Project to End Abuse through Counseling and Education (PEACE), an organization that works with perpetrators of domestic violence to help eliminate repeat episodes of violence, and served on the Board of Directors of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA); and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lyle was also a founding member and president of Tennessee Leadership and served as president of both the League of Women Voters of Nashville and Planned Parenthood; and

WHEREAS, a consummate professional, Ms. Lyle served in leadership positions in several legal organizations, including the Nashville Bar Association, the Tennessee Bar Association, and the American Bar Association; she also contributed her time and talents to the ACLU, ALTRUSA, American Association of University Women, Board of Ethical Conduct of the Metro Nashville Council, Business and Professional Women, CABLE, Madison Women's Health Center Advisory Board, NAACP, National Organization of Women, NAWBO, WIN, Women's SPARC, and the YWCA; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to awards and accolades, in 1990, Ms. Lyle received the Overcoming the Odds Award from the Tennessee Lawyers Association for Women and was also named Woman of the Year by the Business and Professional Woman's Club; in 1995, she was honored with the Harry Burn Award by the Tennessee Women's Political Caucus and was named the Small Business Administration Advocate of the Year in Tennessee in 1998; in 2004, she received the prestigious ATHENA Award for her outstanding leadership; and

WHEREAS, Mary Frances Lyle enjoyed the loving companionship of her devoted husband, Michael "Mike" Lyle, who preceded her in death on April 10, 2016, and to whom she had been married since July 12, 1954; and

WHEREAS, she is survived by her four children and their spouses, Elizabeth Anne Lyle Miller and Richard George Miller, Stephen Michael Lyle and Pamela Marie Benken Lyle, Mary Carol Lyle Hollis and Sterling Alex Hollis, Jr., and David Robert Lyle and Douglas Charles Murray; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lyle is further survived by her ten grandchildren and their spouses, Amie Therese Hollis and David Patrick Bone, Anne Marie Miller Morris and William Homer "Tripp" Morris III, Michael Robert Benken Lyle, Laura Elizabeth Miller Ramirez and Robert Allen Ramirez, Matthew Bryan Benken Lyle and Mimi Phan, Caitlin Frances Miller Bonds and Truman Andrew "Tab" Bonds, Sarah Elizabeth Hollis Barker and Brad Robert Barker, Stuart Thomas Hollis, Mary Charlotte Lyle-Murray, and Frances Elizabeth Lyle-Murray; and

WHEREAS, she will also be fondly remembered by her thirteen great-grandchildren, her sister and brother-in-law, Roberta Jessie Hodges Bartol and Thomas Matthew Bartol, Sr., her brother and sister-in-law, Robert Lewis Hodges, Jr., and Carolyn Abney Hodges, and her nephews and niece, Thomas Matthew Bartol, Jr., and Wendy Graham, Michael Joseph Bartol and Kelley Antkiewicz, and Frances Noreen Bartol; and

WHEREAS, Mary Frances Lyle leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Mary Frances Hodges Lyle, reflecting fondly upon her impeccable character and her stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Ms. Lyle.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.